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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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Settled Areas of Odessa Oblast

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1. The rural area surrounding the village of Mariental (46°23'N - 30°28'E), southwest of Odessa, was settled predominately by Volksdeutsch. All were engaged in agricultural pursuits on collective farms. Crops raised were wheat, corn, barley and oats. Villages were numerous; most of them had a population of five to six hundred families. Collective farm labor lived in such villages. Inhabitants owned their house and a small garden plot. Taxes were paid on house and garden.
2. During the 1920's and 1930's there was little interference with the social and cultural customs of Volksdeutsch by the Soviets. An exception was the organizing of collective farms. Prior to 1939 and the German-Soviet Pact of that year, grade schools were taught in German and the Russian language was unknown. Subsequently, Russian teachers were introduced, or Russian-speaking Volksdeutsch, and Russian was the language of instruction. Volksdeutsch population of Odessa Oblast numbered between 100 thousand and 150 thousand prior to World War II.
3. Volksdeutsch held minor administrative positions in collective farms and village organizations. Soviet superiors controlled all important posts and used Volksdeutsch merely as functionaries. Personal contact with Soviets in everyday life was slight.
4. Unless a youth had aspirations for a higher education, or actively sought a bureaucratic position in the Soviet State, there were little or no obligations to the USSR. Prior to 1941 and the entry of the USSR into World War II, Volksdeutsch were not drafted into the Red Army. In 1941, 25 youths were drafted into the Army from the village of Mariental. Population of the village was about one thousand.
5. Heavy timber cutting in fulfillment of five year plans denuded forest areas of Odessa Oblast. In order to replenish timber supply, strips of seedlings were planted in 1934-35 by Soviet Government several kilometers in length and eight to ten meters in width. Such strips were planted on collective farms and cut over areas. The project through 1944 promised to be a success.
6. Electric power was available in villages on the farming area southwest of Odessa. Power came via overhead lines from hydro plants in Odessa environs. Numerous rivers in the Oblast and dam construction resulted in greater availability of electric power than in most other rural areas of the Ukraine.

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7. A large military installation was situated about four kilometers northeast of Mariental. It was a troop training area and included an airfield and bombing range. The area was about 25 thousand hectares in size. Countryside was flat, and crossed by numerous streams.

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